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A
S E R M O N

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF THE
Rev. Mr. FRANCIS SPILSBURY,

Who departed this Life, March 3, 1782,

In the 77th Year of his Age:

PREACHED at *Salters-Hall*, March 17, 1782.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

The O R A T I O N

Delivered at his Interment.

By H. WORTHINGTON, Jun.

Published at the Request of the Family, and the
Congregation.

Mihi quidem—quantum est ereptus, vivit tamen, semperque
vivet. Virtutem enim amavi illius Viri, quæ extincta non est:
nec mihi soli versatur ante oculos, qui illam in manibus habui,
sed etiam posteris erit clara & insignis.

Cic. de Amicit.

L O N D O N:

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SEPMON



W. Musgrave.

Mr. Spilsbury
TO THE
MUCH AFFLICTED, YET TRULY RESIGNED WIDOW
OF THE DECEASED;

TO HIS DESCENDANTS,
AND THE COLLATERAL BRANCHES
OF HIS FAMILY;

AND TO THE
SOCIETY OF PROTESTANT DISSENTERS,
WORSHIPING AT SALTERS-HALL,
OVER WHOM
HE WAS PASTOR FORTY YEARS;

THESE PAGES ARE INSCRIBED,

WITH THE UTMOST RESPECT,

GRATITUDE AND AFFECTION,

BY THE AUTHOR.

TO THE
MUCH AFFLICTED, YET TRULY DESIRING, WITNESS
OF THE DECEASED;
TO HIS DECEASED WIFE
ADVERTISEMENT.

AND TO THE
THE agitation of mind under which the
following discourse was composed, together
with the Author's illness since its delivery,
are circumstances, which cannot fail to call
forth the Reader's candour to the errors and
deficiencies he may observe.

THESE PAPERS
WAS TA-LO
MUSEUM

A

S E R M O N, &c.

HEBREWS xiii. 7.

REMEMBER THEM——WHO HAVE SPOKEN UN-
TO YOU THE WORD OF GOD ; WHOSE FAITH
FOLLOW ; CONSIDERING THE END OF THEIR
CONVERSATION.

TO *rejoice with them that do rejoice, and to
weep with them that weep,** is a maxim,
not more beautiful, than necessary, in the con-
duct of life. The affluent and prosperous
must ever wish for some kind friend to share
their joys, which indeed are scarcely joys, till
the voice of congratulation is heard among them.
On the contrary, they that dwell in the valley
of weeping greatly need the help of sympathy,
and condolence, from their fellow creatures,

B

which

* Rom. xii. 15.

which by dividing the burden may proportionably diminish its weight. In all cases, and in all extremities, what we wish for ourselves, we should cheerfully render to others. This will have a double effect, for it will leave a mutual blessing on the giver and receiver: and it will be applying friendship to its noblest purpose, that of extracting virtue and happiness from every vicissitude of time.

It is readily acknowledged, that to *congratulate* is a more pleasing office, than to *condole* and I believe, the greatest part of the world thinks the former so remote from the latter, that they must be exercised at different times, and on different occasions. Here, give me leave to enter my exception to the general opinion, being fully persuaded of the contrary; I am satisfied, they arise from dispositions of mind altogether consistent and harmonious; they may both be exerted in one breast, at one hour, and upon one occasion.—Do ye question this truth? believe me, the preacher is an example of it, to day: and if ye will examine but for a moment into yourselves, a faithful witness of the fact may be found, in every bosom through this assembly. You are come hither, to shew your respect to a deceased pastor, who merited all the respect you can pay him; you are come to bewail that loss, which hath drawn forth many tears both from acquaintance and
strangers;

strangers ; you weep, not for yourselves only, but for afflicted relatives, whose souls are bowed down with undissembled grief :—But have ye no cause for rejoicing, in the midst of this condolence ? Is it not matter of congratulation, that the world was long blessed with such an edifying example, and the church of Christ long instructed by so faithful a teacher ? Is it not delightful to reflect on what he *was*, and to raise the eye of contemplation to what he *now is* ? Do ye not feel the privilege of having been once related to such a character, and are ye not wishing and expecting to renew an intercourse with him, in the world of spirits, when ye quit these houses of clay ?

Therefore, *dearly beloved and longed for*, rejoice as well as mourn. Give thanks to Almighty God, *the father of mercies and the God of all comfort*,* that we do not sorrow, *even as others which have no hope*.† Every church has abundant cause for rejoicing, when the ministers from whom it is separated, were men bestowed by providence for an example ; men, of whose memory we need not be ashamed ; whose lives will bear to be examined, retraced, and imitated ; whose character wants not the time-serving hand of flattery, nor the mean arts of palliation and deceit.

B 2

Blessed

* 2 Cor. i. 3.

† 1 Thes. iv. 13.

Blessed be God, this is my encouragement and support, under that heavy office, which respect and friendship have devolved upon me! I know, that great abilities are not necessary to set forth what *all* have seen, and to recommend what *all* admire. Ingenuity is a needful assistant, where there are defects to be covered, failings to be hid, and equivocal virtues to be celebrated. But genuine goodness requires no varnish—like the pure diamond, it ought to pass uncoloured—surely, it need only be exhibited and proposed as a model, in order to captivate universal attention;—except in cases, where men imitating the conduct of the Israelites, *shut their eyes, that they may not see, and harden their hearts, lest they should be converted.*

On these principles, I have made choice of St. Paul's address to the Hebrews, as the basis of the present discourse;—REMEMBER THEM—WHO HAVE SPOKEN UNTO YOU THE WORD OF GOD; WHOSE FAITH FOLLOW; CONSIDERING THE END OF THEIR CONVERSATION. In reciting this text, you may perceive, I have omitted a clause, which is improperly rendered by our translators, “remember them *who have the rule over you;*” where the use of the present time is totally inconsistent with the Apostle's meaning, who was speaking of past rulers, and deceased instructors, as is clear
to

to a demonstration from the remainder of the passage*.

We may divide the words before us into two parts—the *first* containing the apostolic exhortation to churches bereaved of their pastors—the *second*, an important reason or principle, on which that exhortation is grounded.

I. Let us consider the duty here pressed upon christians, when they are bereaved of their faithful instructors.—The advice is two-fold, to bear them in remembrance, and to imitate them in principle and conduct. Now, these sentiments are very closely connected, since a forgetfulness of our friends must, of necessity, exclude all desire and possibility of resembling them.

1. We are to bear them in *remembrance*: a branch of advice, very suitable to the feelings of nature, and the dictates of reason.

If by remembrance you understand mere *recollection*, which is the primitive sense of the word, it may be asked, why was the faculty of memory originally given us, but that we may retain in our thoughts such persons, and such events, as shall be most likely to promote our virtue, credit and happiness?

But

* The Greek word *νενυμενος*, is rendered as a *substantive* in Luke xxii, 26; and that form seems to be most eligible here: “Remember your *guides* who have spoken, &c.”

Blessed be God, this is my encouragement and support, under that heavy office, which respect and friendship have devolved upon me! I know, that great abilities are not necessary to set forth what *all* have seen, and to recommend what *all* admire. Ingenuity is a needful assistant, where there are defects to be covered, failings to be hid, and equivocal virtues to be celebrated. But genuine goodness requires no varnish—like the pure diamond, it ought to pass uncoloured—surely, it need only be exhibited and proposed as a model, in order to captivate universal attention;—except in cases, where men imitating the conduct of the Israelites, *shut their eyes, that they may not see, and barden their hearts, lest they should be converted.*

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But every one knows, that much more than this is meant by the Apostle's expression, for remembrance must here signify *esteem—admiration—gratitude*. And certainly you will allow, that of all mankind, none are so entitled to this respectful tribute, as the prudent, faithful and generous. Is it not undeniable, that we frequently commemorate characters which have been serviceable to the state, even though we have reason to think, they were not influenced by virtuous motives? We rejoice in the good they did to the world, notwithstanding our apprehension, that selfishness instead of generosity was the principle. What signal respect then, my christian friends, should we entertain for those, who united the best principle with the best conduct! Who were useful, not by accident or whim, or to serve their own advantage, but from the noblest sense of duty, and the most liberal wishes of benevolence: Whose hearts and hands were always in unison, so that with strict sincerity they might adopt our Saviour's motto, *my meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work**.

Say, my brethren, are not these *the excellent of the earth, in whom was all your delight*?†. If they were now alive, would ye not seek their company,

* John iv, 34.

† Psal. xvi, 3.

company, and above all things rejoice in their converse? Would ye not look to them with reverence, as so many guides in perplexity, so many guardians in danger, so many patrons and benefactors to the church and to the world? —I know that ye would: therefore be consistent with yourselves: go on to venerate those, with whom now ye shall converse no more! If the just are removed, let *the memory of the just be blessed.** If the righteous have left you, see to it as far as lies in your power, *that the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.†*

These remarks may be applied in general to all good persons, who are carried away by death; and surely they operate with peculiar force, in the situation we now experience; a situation exactly coincident with the nature and design of the Apostle's words, for he speaks of the removal of christian *ministers*: "Remember them *who have spoken unto you the word of God.*"—As if he had said, with affection and gratitude recollect your spiritual leaders, who were lately among you, dispensing truth and knowledge; remember them, not only in their private capacity as men, but in their sacred office as ministers; do honour to them who *bore the vessels of the Lord's house* with steadiness, and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.

* Prov. x, 7.

† Psal. cxii, 6.

*sake.** Keep in mind the assiduity and zeal they discovered to promote the welfare of immortal souls. Think how they laboured for your good, both in private and public, *in season and out of season*,—how they visited you in sickness, and prayed with you in affliction. Remember, how willing they were *to spend and be spent* in their master's service, even till grey hairs were upon them, and their strength began to fail, and the grasshopper to be a burden,—*not counting their lives dear to themselves, so that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry they had received of the Lord Jesus.†*

Yes, think of them in the progress of your journey to a better world,—it will assist that progress. Secure a little time, from the calls of business, and the amusements of life, to meditate on such characters, and such ministers; for depend upon it, your recollection of them will amply repay you. It will fill the vacant mind with good things; it will lead the ambitious mind to an honest and honourable pride; it will delight you in the gloom of solitude, and improve and enrich your intercourse with society. I was going to say, that when our mercies are fled, this would recall their flight, or be the means of prolonging their existence, in effect and application. Thus, the *knowledge*
which

* 1 Thess. v. 13.

† Acts xx. 24.

which is remembered still enlightens,—the *example* that is reviewed still animates,—and the *friendship*, that is recollected, still refreshes and consoles.

But, methinks I hear it whispered from every part of this assembly, “Your advice is unnecessary, for we cannot forget our departed friend; his image will be stamp’d with deep impression on our minds, as long as we breathe this vital air; it cannot be effaced, till we also lie down in the clods of the valley, and the worms shall cover us.”—My friends, I do not wish to deny the truth of this reply, sincerely believing that it comes from the heart. But, I must divest myself of all knowledge of human nature, if I did not ground some fears on that very *confidence*. For the less suspicion we have of forgetting a thing, the more likely we are to forget it: and for this plain reason, we take the less pains to renew and deepen the impression. Therefore suffer me, after the manner of the apostle, *to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance*.^{*} Be careful, that ye never forget them, who have spoken unto you the word of God,—but recollect *WHAT* and *HOW* they have spoken: and for this purpose, *give the more earnest heed to the things which ye have heard, lest at any*

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time

* 2 Pet. iii, 1.

time ye should let them slip.* † This leads me to observe,

2. That we are to *imitate*, as well as remember, our deceased instructors. In the words of the Apostle, *their faith we must follow*; a simple, but a comprehensive phrase. It may be necessary, however, to guard it a little from perversion or mistake.—In this exhortation, St. Paul could not refer to the *minutiae* of a religious creed; he could not mean to press it upon us, as a duty, to think in every particular as our public instructors have thought before us. Such an explication of the words would very ill accord with the catholic and generous principles of the Apostle, which he discovered on a thousand occasions; particularly in that remarkable passage to the Corinthians—*not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy.*§ In fact, there is no possibility of making all men think alike, in religious matters, especially in those of an intricate and refined nature. A man's opinion has a close dependance on a variety of circumstances, which cannot be changed or removed at pleasure: such as,
the

* Heb. ii, 1.

† Omnis disciplina *memoria* maximè constat, frustra-
que docemur, si quidquid audimus, præter fluit.

Quint. l. xi. c. 2.

§ 2d Ep. i, 24.

the original powers given to the mind—the peculiarities of education—the reverence he feels for some instructors more than for others—the books, the companions and the prejudices, with which he is surrounded. All these must occasion diversities of sentiment, and will commonly render those diversities as durable as life. Therefore, in the words before you, the Apostle could have no reference to the uniformity of implicit faith.—To what then does he allude? I answer; to one or both of these two things—either the general profession of the christian religion, or the culture of that vital and practical belief in its precepts and promises, which by changing the heart regulates the life.

In the first sense, he recommends an imitation of our spiritual guides, *in their faith and profession of the christian religion*. This epistle was addressed to profelytes, who were in danger of reverting to their former jewish principles, if not of being drawn aside to follow the absurdities of the pagan system. On this account, he warns them not to make shipwreck of faith, nor to leave their christian communion, privileges and worship, but to remain firm in their adherence to a crucified Saviour; and for this end, to look to the example of those eminent servants of God, who had lately been among them.

them. "Follow their faith:" like them confess Christ before the world; confess him before rulers and magistrates, should necessity require. Having such for an example, embrace your religion from principle instead of caprice; and having done so, preserve with care the faith once delivered to the saints. Remember that *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*;* and that being immutable in his own character and doctrine, he cannot be pleased with versatilitv and fickleness in his Disciples. Therefore *be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines, for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.*† Let neither the flattery of the world deceive you, nor its frowns deter, nor its opinions perplex, since "he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed—and the double minded man is unstable in all his ways."

The other sense, in which we understand the Apostle, is a resemblance of our departed instructors, in the culture of *that vital and practical belief* in divine revelation, which changes the heart and regulates the life. This application of the term is clearly pointed out to us in various passages of this epistle to the Hebrews, especially in the following words, which

are

* Verse 8.

Verse 9.

are directly parallel to those in the text. *We desire, that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be NOT SLOTHFUL, but FOLLOWERS of them, who through FAITH and PATIENCE, inherit the promises**. This injunction extends far beyond speculative inquiries, or nominal profession; it includes both the interior system, and the external conduct, requiring sincerity and purity in the first, exertion and industry in the last. If further proof be necessary, look to the temper and actions of that list of glorious worthies, which is recorded in the *eleventh chapter*. What was that faith, by which Abel presented unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain? By which Abraham offered up his son, in obedience to the Divine command? By which the Patriarchs confessed, that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and sought a better country, that is a heavenly? By which Moses rejected the blandishments of a court, and renounced the pleasures of sin? I ask, what was that faith which enabled the servants of God to subdue kingdoms, to work righteous, and obtain promises?—You are perfectly sensible, that this could not be a superficial belief in the declaration God had made of his will, but must be a principle
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* Heb. vi, 11, 12.

of piety deeply inwrought into the soul; it was a powerful spring of love, fidelity and zeal, which raised them above difficulties, inspired them in their religious calling, gave them steadiness in temptation, made them patient in suffering, and has now advanced them to the rest which remaineth for the people of God. Oh, *follow* such a faith! *imitate* it closely, and *represent* it constantly; for that appears to be the true force of the expression, which is supposed to have been borrowed from the exhibitions of a theatre.* Let the character you have lately seen in others, now be adopted for your own, and let it be given with such resemblance and energy, that none can possibly mistake its design, or be unaffected with its beauty. Shew *such* a principle of goodness in every part of your deportment—such a faithfulness in your covenant transactions with God—such a dependence on Divine mercy unto eternal life—such philanthropy to your fellow creatures on earth,—and such maturity for the joys and glories of heaven. Live as they lived, and you shall share their distinguished honours.

II. Let

* *μεμνησθε*.——The same word is used (though not in the same form) in the parallel place, above referred to. *Heb. vi, 12.*

II. Let us now advert to the motive suggested by the Apostle, to enforce the exhortation he had delivered.—He calls upon us to *consider the end of their conversation*. By this I understand, that we ought to affect our minds with the HONOURABLE and HAPPY CLOSE of their life. It was honourable, because marked with perseverance—it was happy, because it issued in a reward compleat and eternal: and these are considerations, which may well stimulate our desires to resemble them.

I. Since their conversation was marked with perseverance, its close was *honourable*. To continue steadfast in well doing unto the end, must be acknowledged to be a matter of the greatest moment, whether we regard the testimony of conscience, the applause of our fellow-creatures, or the approbation of God. On this subject, the language of the Old and New Testament is equally strong and decisive. The Divine Being has declared by his Prophet, that *when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity—all the righteousness which he hath done shall not be mentioned; in his trespasss that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.** In like manner, he has affirmed by one of his Apostles,
if

* Ezek. xviii, 24.

*if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.** And thus our blessed Saviour, from the throne of his glory, has addressed himself to each of his Disciples, *Be thou faithful UNTO DEATH, and I will give thee a crown of life.†*—But we know, there are men in the world, who require a different sort of evidence, and who would much rather listen to the words of a heathen philosopher than to the language of inspiration; let such, therefore, be reminded of the sententious advice of Solon, PRAISE NO MAN TILL HE DIES. In this rule of judging, he abundantly discovers his acquaintance with mankind, and with himself; he shews, what a sense he had of the weakness of human nature, and of the mutability of human goodness—of the temptations which beset our virtue, and of the glory acquired by uniform resistance and victory. Suffer me to ask, how do we judge in other matters? Do we not suspend our opinion, till they are *finished*? When we look at a rising edifice, we do not venture to decide on its magnificence or usefulness, merely from considering the foundation, or from surveying only a few columns raised by the hand of the architect: but we deem it prudent to wait for a completion of the design, and when the whole

* Heb. x, 38.

† Rev. ii, 10.

whole is perfected, then our applause is as loud and voluntary, as it is merited and judicious.

Some think that the Apostle, in the text, had a peculiar reference to the case of martyrdom. Many of the early Disciples, after living the ambassadors of Christ, died his sufferers: having preached the truth, they sealed it with their blood; so that *both in life and death the Lord was magnified* by them, and "the end of their conversation" became a glory and example to the world. But where Providence exempts us from such an awful proof of fidelity to religion, it is still matter of admiration, to see the principles of sound piety strengthening and ripening to the very close of this temporal existence; to behold *the christian* advancing to perfection, when *the man* trembles under the load of mortality; to mark the progress of his graces amidst the decay of nature, and even by that decay illuminated and confirmed. In such a character, "there is a dignity and majesty, which a man must be blind as a statue not to perceive; or perceiving, insensible as a statue, not to admire."

2. As their conduct has issued in an everlasting recompence, the close was *happy*. And need there be a stronger inducement, for
LOOKING at the EXIT of their conversation,

D

which

which is literally the meaning of the original words? * Can universal nature present an object, more worthy to be viewed with complacency? Oh, *mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the END of that man is PEACE.* † While standing on the threshold of eternity, his mind is undismayed and tranquil. In the very moment of suspense between two worlds, he looks back upon one with satisfaction, and forward into the other with hope. He has this for his “rejoicing, the testimony of conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he has had his conversation here.” And consequently, he stretches forth his hand to receive the recompence of mercy, which is laid up for his enjoyment, in a state durable as his soul, and boundless as his desires.—Pause a minute, my friends, and attentively consider, what glory and happiness open on the departed spirits of the just! Think, into what company they are introduced, in what business they are employed, to what stations they are elevated, what devotions they are paying—Think how *they serve God, and see his face,* ‡ while the light of knowledge breaks upon their intellects, while their faculties are expanding and strengthening

* ἀναθεωροῦντες τὴν ἐκβάσιν, K. T. A.

† Psal. xvii, 37.

‡ Rev. xxii, 3, 4.

eming to receive it, while the means of virtue grow with its use, and exclude the possibility of falling—meditate on that blissful state, where the eye is never filled with tears, nor the heart corroded with anxiety; where the *past* never excites remorse, the *present* distrust, nor the *future* apprehension; where friendship is sublimed into perfect pleasure, and jealousy and distance can divide no more; in a word, where the Saviour reigns in the fullness of his splendor, and *because he lives*, his servants *shall live also*.

This is the end of the righteous. They are not only taken away from the evil to come, but they enter immediately into happiness—not indeed equal to the felicity reserved for the morning of the resurrection, but yet positive, intelligent and glorious. *When absent from the body, they are present with the Lord—which is far better than to be here.** They quit

D 2

these

* Compare 2 Cor. v, 8. and Phil. i, 23. — Cicero, speaking of death, has this admirable passage; *Nam cum supremus ille dies non animi extinctionem, sed commutationem tantum afferat loci—quid optabilius? Itaque si quid tale acciderit, ut à Deo nobis denunciatur videatur exire è vita; læti & agentes gratias pareamus, emittique nos è custodia, & levare vinculis arbitremur, ut in æternam & planè in nostram domum remigremus. Mortem portum nobis & perfugium putemus.*

1 *Tusc. n. 116, &c.*

these mortal shores, in which affliction imbitters comfort, and clouds spread a gloom upon the prospect; they take leave of a country, subject to vanity, disorder and death, and set sail for their *desired haven*. Nor is it in vain: for an *abundant entrance* is ministered unto them into that delightful region, where “their sun shall no more go down, nor their moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be their everlasting light, and the days of their mourning shall be ended!”

Come forth, thou infidel, who deniest a future state to man! Come forth, in all the dignity of genius, and tell us that the christian religion would fetter thy noble spirit! For once, condescend to make good thy charge. Prove that to be IMMORTAL is to be MEAN, and that faith in the happiness of heaven sinks the glory, and augments the distresses of earth. Alas! poor creature, where is thy boasted pre-eminence? The utmost of *thy* expectation is, to flutter through a circle of vanity for forty or fifty years, and then lie down with the worms, in no sense wiser, better, or happier, than they are!—But very different is the state of true christians: while they live, they are *looking for the blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ*: and when they cease to live, the Divine Spirit has
 commissioned

commissioned us to write on their tombs—
*Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord, from
 henceforth; they rest from their labours, and their
 works do follow them.*

Methinks, on a review of these particulars,
 it must be the language of every one, that can
 either distinguish or feel, LET ME DIE THE
 DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS, AND LET MY LAST
 END BE LIKE HIS!

I trust, this is the application you are all
 making of the present subject, and of the awe-
 ful event which has directed to it. I am sure,
 it is the best proof of respect to your late vene-
 rable pastor, who wants not a place in your
 remembrance, but that ye may imitate; and
 whose character I shall now sketch, not for the
 sake of praising the dead, but, with a view to
 improve the living.—Of the leading incidents
 of *his life*, you may naturally expect some no-
 tice to be taken here, though it seldom hap-
 pens, that studious and sedentary lives are ca-
 pable of furnishing materials to satisfy curio-
 sity. They are cast in a situation, that is rarely
 distinguished by the magnitude or novelty of
 its events, the rapidity or brilliancy of its
 scenes.—The late Rev. Mr. *Francis Spilbury*
 was the grandson of that worthy divine Mr.
John Spilbury of *Bromsgrove*, who was ejected
 from the Church of England by the Act of
 Uniformity

Uniformity in 1662; he gave up his living, to preserve the rights of conscience, and a sense of those rights he transmitted to posterity.* He had only one son, who was pastor to a congregation of dissenters, for many years, at *Kidderminster*, and for whom the meeting in that town was built; yet such was the lovely harmony subsisting between his people, and the members of the established church, that the former accommodated their hours of worship to the convenience of the latter, and thus both had the opportunity of *mutual* attendance in the two places of devotion; an opportunity, which they did not fail to improve.—This good man was the *father* of your late excellent minister, who truly inherited his father's spirit.

Our much valued friend was born at *Kidderminster*, in the year of our Lord 1706; and having passed through the usual course of grammar-learning, he removed to *Findon* in *Derbyshire* for academical education, where he studied four years under that eminent professor of divinity, the Rev. Dr. *Latham*. After this, his father, who was desirous of giving him every possible improvement, left it to his choice,

* Mr. *Baxter* gives him the character of “ a man of extraordinary worth, for moderation, peaceableness, ability, ministerial diligence, and an upright life.”

See *Calam. Abridg.* vol. ii, p. 773.

choice, either to spend a year in *England* under the care of some aged minister, or to pass the same time in the universities of *Scotland* or *Leyden*. To the last place he objected, having heard of a corruption in its morals, and that most young people who went there came back without any religion at all.* He determined therefore for *Glasgow*, where he had the happiness of sitting under the last lectures of the persecuted but venerable *Sympson*. At that time (as he told me, but a week before he died) his knowledge of the Latin language was so perfect, that he could not only write, but speak it, with as much ease and fluency as the English. When he returned from Scotland, he found his father and two of his sisters dead; and after residing some time at Kidderminster, in the capacity of an assistant to the Rev. Mr. *Bradshaw*, he undertook the pastoral care of a society at *Bromsgrove*, where he continued about five years, and afterwards at *Worcester*, where he remained about seven. In both places, he was a very acceptable, popular and useful minister, and was never known to mention either

* The justice of this charge the author cannot pretend to prove; he would charitably hope it was exaggerated, as reports commonly are. Supposing it entirely groundless, yet the motive which influenced Mr. Spilsbury's choice does him real and lasting honour.

either of them, without strongly expressing the happiness he there enjoyed.

It must have been about this period, that a considerable living in the established church was offered him,* which he immediately and firmly refused, though at that time his circumstances were not so independent, as in the latter part of his life. But no prospect of advantage or emolument could induce him to sacrifice the principles which he had adopted from conviction.

From Worcester he removed to *London*, and his introduction to this place was such as seemed to point out the finger of Providence. He received an invitation in the year 1741, from that worthy minister under whom your fathers sat, Mr. *John Newman*, to come up, and make a friendly visit at his house. On his arrival in this city, he found his friend not only seized with sickness, but actually in dying circumstances; and preaching for him two Lord's-days in this pulpit, his services on that occasion opened the way for that long train of labours among you, to which he was called after Mr. *Newman's* decease. I am authorized to add, that the late Dr. *William Harris* † confirmed the society in their approbation of Mr.

Spilf-

* At *Abby de la Zouch*, in Leicestershire.

† Author of an invaluable set of *funeral discourses*.

Spilbury, and in their intention to invite him, urging it upon them in these remarkable words —“ Choose him, for he will wear well.” So much, however, was he attached to his situation in the country, that nothing but the hopes of more enlarged usefulness could have forced him from his former connections. Divine Providence hath now terminated the services of his well spent life, and with perfect satisfaction and pleasure, I make the appeal to yourselves: *Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, he behaved himself among you;—not handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending himself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.**

In his *private character*, there were numerous excellencies, which need not be recited here, as all good men have some common resemblance to each other. I shall therefore attempt no more, than to particularise a few of those qualities, which might be called his predominant features, and which in a peculiar sense endeared him to all his acquaintance.— Among these, his friendly disposition, and readiness to serve those about him, were very conspicuous. He had a heart formed for so-

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* 1 Thes. ii, 10.—2 Cor. iv, 12.

cial connections, and possess a degree of cheerfulness and humour in conversation, which was always tempered with prudence, and conducive to pleasure. Far was he from thinking, that a morose countenance can recommend religion, especially among young people, or that God's service is to be promoted by a gloomy disposition.—And I am sure, he was as distant from uncharitableness, as any man I have known or heard of. His soul was always devising liberal things; the spirit of bigotry he detested; all good men were his favourites, whatever sentiments they espoused, and to whatever sect they belonged. He viewed them as children of the same merciful father; he loved them as fellow heirs of the grace of life.

May this declaration be the means of shaming those, who have been known to speak highly of Mr. *Spilbury's* character (because they supposed a similarity between his sentiments and their own) while their treatment of other ministers hath but too plainly discovered, that they want his brightest jewel—charity.

How indefatigable he was in promoting the cause of the poor and needy, numbers who dwell in obscure parts of the country can testify. You need not be told, that many poor but valuable ministers, many afflicted widows and orphans, have found him a faithful and generous

ous advocate, in the distribution of public and annual assistance, to say nothing of private gratuities. He was truly *the good Samaritan*, making it his business and delight to help the necessitous, and devoting a great part of his time to their relief.

When such good will to men is joined with unfeigned piety to God, and with uncommon submission under the severest trials, who can wonder, that even the mouth of calumny is closed, and that every tongue is employed in doing justice to the character. We can say of our friend, what an Apostle said of Demetrius, *he hath a good report of ALL men*, and we can likewise add the second part of the encomium, *and of the TRUTH itself.**

His behaviour in the domestic relations of life is a subject too delicate for public enlargement; suffice it therefore to say, in one comprehensive expression, to which all his relatives can bear ample testimony, *having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

And here, my friends, you must indulge me a moment in thinking and speaking of my own loss. My share in the sorrows of this day is peculiarly heavy, and I greatly need the comfort I wish to impart. I have lost *the guide of my*
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youth,

* 3 John, 12. v.

*youth, to whose council I had always access, and beneath whose fostering wing I have reposed for years. Truth requires me to declare, what shall never be effaced from my remembrance, that since I first knew him, I never received an unkind expression from his lips: and such was my esteem and reverence for him, that in this respect I may allude to the words of the Apostle, as a son with a father, I have served with him in the Gospel.**

In his *public or ministerial* character, he uniformly discovered the same principles of integrity, meekness, benevolence and devotion, as were daily manifest in his private life. *He served the Lord with all humility of mind, and kept back nothing that was profitable unto you; but shewed you, and taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.†* He never appeared so happy as when engaged in the duties of the temple, never so distressed as when detained by infirmity and sickness from performing them. Ye will all bear record, that he brought with him to his work, a mind deeply impressed with its importance; and that instead of amusing the flock of God with things of a trivial nature, or perplexing them with those of a controversial kind, he insisted upon plain,

* Phil. ii, 22. † Acts xx. 18, 21:

plain, practical subjects, being convinced that such are most conformable to the model left us by our Saviour.—Of his sentiments on the intricate points of polemical divinity, I am not able to give a precise definition; for he classed himself under no leader; he *called no man master* upon earth; but grieved for the disputes in the church, and often expressed his wish, that there was but *one name* among us—a Christian.

In his compositions, he seem'd to imitate the simplicity of that Evangelist, to whose charitable temper his heart bore the strongest resemblance. His method was clear, his thoughts unaffected, and his discourses were enriched by many scriptural allusions and references, which he wisely judged to be best adapted for usefulness.

He had one distinguishing excellence, which it would be unjust in me to conceal, as I was frequently a witness to it, and yet of a nature not to be exhibited on the public theatre of life. I allude to his prayers in sick and dying chambers, in which I have constantly thought he excelled himself. They were pointed without offending, various and unrestrained, truly devout, and remarkably affectionate.—I hope, those who enjoyed the privilege of such pastoral visits, and are still spared in life, will never forget, nor fail to improve them!

And,

And now, christian brethren, what remains, but that we endeavor to practice that *form of sound words* which he delivered, and to resemble that holy, useful and amiable pattern which he has set? He has lived to a glorious purpose, if we do but follow his steps. Do ye not hear, as it were, a voice from his grave, addressing itself to your hearts—*those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, do—and the God of peace shall be with you**. With all the powers of my soul, I beseech you, let not such a charge be addressed in vain. If any of you have trifled with his living services, be not deaf to the awful admonitions of his tomb. “Dust and ashes loudest preach the infinite concern.”† Assure yourselves of this fact, and let it properly touch your feelings, that but a day or two before he expired, he declared he had but *one anxiety* remaining on his mind, and that was, “a solicitude to know how far he had been useful among you—whether he had been the means of saving one immortal soul: if he had, he could quit the world with delight!”—Good and faithful minister! I trust, he will have *MANY to be his joy, and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus!* See to it, that ye fulfil his joy.

I have

* Phil. iv, 9.

† Dr. Young.

I have trespassed long on your patience; yet I must not close, without presenting to God my fervent prayers for YOU ALL: for this bereaved *Church*, that it may always have pastors and teachers, who shall do the work of the Lord diligently, feeding it with knowledge and with understanding: for the *relatives* of our deceased friend, that as their remembrance of him must be lasting, so their imitation of him may be perfect: particularly, for his faithful and affectionate *widow*, that “as her afflictions abound, so her consolations in Christ may abound also;” that the recollection of past assiduity and tenderness may now sweeten the cup of sorrow, and that she may always be supported by that God, “who is the judge of the widow’s cause, in his holy habitation:”—and finally, my wishes and prayers are pour’d out for his *descendants*, that they may long be continued an honour to the principles they inherit, and a blessing to all with whom they are connected; *may they know the God of their fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind*; and may the great Disposer of events *guide them by his unerring council*, and at length *receive them to glory*. Amen.

T H E E N D.

(48)

THE
ORATION

AT THE

INTERMENT

in BUNHILL - FIELDS.

My Christian Friends,

THIS gloomy ground, where I now meet you with the most poignant grief, may well bring to our remembrance that expression of the Psalmist, *the valley of the shadow of Death*. Surely, this seems to be the chosen spot, on which the fatal monarch has erected his throne: for though in every place he is known by the judgments which he executes, yet here emphatically his vassals are collected to swell the triumph of his reign. Here are deposited in awful silence the trophies of an unbounded conquest: *the great and the small are here*; the once wretched, and the once happy, are blend-

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ed in the same dust. And we, my brethren, are hastening to this residence, with a swiftness but little suspected. Year after year glides away unperceived, with soft but speedy wings, and every man draweth after him, as there were innumerable before him.

These are melancholy reflections—yet, who can wish, who would dare, to suppress them? Is it not said by supreme authority, that *it is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting—for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart?* Therefore, supported by this authority, we scruple not to apply the words, which an Apostle uttered on a very different occasion—IT IS GOOD FOR US TO BE HERE. From this solemn place, you may learn the most valuable lessons; such lessons, as through Divine influence would improve the best characters, and might be the effectual means of reforming the worst. HERE youth may acquire steadiness, and old age resignation. The grave will suggest cogent motives to piety, and communicate fresh vigour to diligence. In this ground, I presume, *the rich man will not glory in his riches, nor the mighty man glory in his strength*, nor the man wise for this world glory in his wisdom. This is the spot, where the mask will drop off from the face of hypocrisy; and he that comes hither to scoff

scoff at religion will go back to pray. Here the vicious may learn to repent, fools to be wise, and the gay to be sober.

Oh, Sirs, standing among the graves, I beseech you, think of the former times. Call up to your imagination the many thousands, who once were active in the busy scenes of life, but have long retired from a tumultuous world, into this land of forgetfulness. They too had their passions and appetites: they also were depressed with fear, or elated with hope; they were subject to the vicissitudes of health and sickness, necessity and affluence, prosperity and sorrow. At one time, they formed connections in the fullness of expectation, which at another were dissolved in the bitterness of tears.—And now ALL are gone: individuals and families are swept away to make room for others; yea, whole congregations are actually sleeping beneath the surface of the ground, and those who instructed them are sharing in the common lot. Ah! mournful thought, the lips of eloquence are for ever sealed, and cold are the hearts which that eloquence had warmed!

Such is the vanity of this terrestrial scene! Such the experience, which all ages have had of the Patriarch's observation—*Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble; he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down, he*
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fleeth also like a shadow, and continueth not. As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up; so man lieth down and riseth not till the heavens are no more: He shall not awake, nor be raised out of his sleep.—Ob LORD, thou destroyest the hope of man! Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth; thou changeest his countenance, and sendest him away.

And is this the whole of man? Just to look about him, and then decay and die? First to be tormented by his passions, and then to be consumed by the worms? Was this the only end for which he was born and educated? This the sole purpose of those intellectual powers which are the ray of Divinity within him?—No, blessed be God, even the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace*; we can look beyond this dark scene to a brighter world, and rise on the wings of faith above the ravages of the tomb. *We know that our Redeemer liveth, and that he will stand in the latter day upon the earth: He once bowed the heavens and came down the messenger of Immortality and of Joy; and he will come a second time, in the clouds of heaven with power and with great glory—his reward is with him, and his work before him,*

Thus

Thus Emanuel has provided that sovereign relief, which pagan philosophy could not effect; which Rome and Athens could not ascertain. Indeed, they knew not the evil under which we laboured; they little imagined that the apostacy of man was the origin of death, and that *so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*. Let us, therefore, with grateful hearts admire the wisdom and goodness of God, who having sent his son to bless us, by turning every one of us from our iniquities, is now publishing in the ear of penitents, this gracious proclamation — *Ye are more than conquerors through him that hath loved you; for if ye believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him. As ye have borne the image of the earthly Adam, ye shall also bear the image of the heavenly: For he will change your vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

I entreat you, fellow christians, fellow mourners, COMFORT ONE ANOTHER WITH THESE WORDS. Ye are possessors of the new Testament, and that should abate the pungency of your grief. Ye boast of a revelation which can throw a lustre upon sepulchres; make use of the light it diffuses around you. Look forward
to

to the *glorious morning*, of a Saviour's descent, and of the Believer's triumph. This melancholy ground shall, on that day, acquire a new title, and rise into new importance: instead of being "the repository of the dead," it shall become "the birth-place of the living." Gracious God! what a different scene from the present! At that period how changed and improved, *these silent remains* of our Dear Friend, which we are now committing to the dust! *They are sown in corruption, but they shall be raised in incorruption—they are sown in dishonour, but they shall be raised in glory—they are sown in weakness, but they shall be raised in power. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written,* DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY.

But, perhaps some of you may think it strange that while the Christian Covenant offers redemption from the *second* death, it should still leave its heirs under the sentence of the *first*. Arguing merely from the impulse of your passions, ye may be ready to question the perfection of that benevolence, which suffers the candidates for glory, to become, like others, the victims of corruption. But let passion submit to reason and religion. Is it fit, that even *true Christians* should be exempt from the power of the grave, when none of them can justly declare, that they are free from iniquity? Ought they

they not to give proof of a perfect character, before they claim the honours and rewards of innocence?—By this awful constitution, the supreme Governor of the world most effectually illustrates the purity of his sacred law, and the “exceeding sinfulness of sin.”—By this he powerfully promotes the virtuous and religious attainments of his children and servants: for the fear of death, lying constantly before them, is admirably calculated to cure them of pride, and to render them both watchful in conduct, and ardent in devotion.----By suffering the agonies of dissolution, they become examples to mankind of faith and patience, of submission and hope, in the most critical season that can attend a state of trial: a benefit, of which the world would be deprived, if all that are pious were like *Enoch* and *Elijah* removed miraculously to glory.---And to add but another reason, the pain, sorrow and darkness, through which good men “must enter into the kingdom of God,” appear naturally subservient to the increase of their joy and rapture, in the society of departed spirits. By augmenting the greatness of the change, they must contribute to its extacy, if it be lawful on this subject to avail ourselves of human experience.

Doubtless, that change is astonishing! None of us can describe, or conceive of it. But we believe

believe and are persuaded, that our much valued friend is, at this instant, rejoicing in its glorious effects. A short but severe illness conveyed him to the mansions of the blessed: and it may give us pleasure to think, that he entered on his reward, upon the morning of THAT DAY, which was always nearest to his heart, and which had witnessed to his faithful labours in the church of Christ, for more than half a century. Delightful transition to a mind prepared like his, for the HEAVENLY SABBATH has neither infirmity, weariness, nor end!—But of his character, both as a christian, and as a minister, of his zeal, fidelity and devotion, I shall not at present speak, reserving to another time and place the tribute I owe to his memory: a tribute, which might have been presented by others, in a manner less unworthy of the occasion, though I trust none can be found to offer it, with more sincerity or gratitude. Indeed, Sirs, I am standing at the grave of *a parent*, and could I stand here unmoved, I must be lost to recollection and to feeling.—May Divine goodness repair the breach, and sanctify the event. May those that mourn in Zion be comforted. May an afflicted church be sustained and blessed, and all surviving friends be enabled to imitate the worth they admire.

To

To you, my revered fathers in the ministry, it would ill become me to address the word of exhortation. Yet suffer me to offer to heaven my prayers for your increasing usefulness. May you long be preserved, under the auspices of the great head of the church, ministering to the knowledge and happiness of many, and when the *Chief Shepherd* shall appear, may you also appear with him in glory, encircled with the multitudes you have trained for immortality.

I cannot conclude, without offering a *general exhortation* to all that are present. Whether friendship or curiosity brought you hither, go not away from this tomb without suitable impressions. Let it be your earnest prayer at the footstool of mercy, "Lord make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am, and may apply my heart unto wisdom." Shew, that you are apprized of the awful nature of death, by seriously and diligently preparing for it. Let it not be said, that the power of this great enemy is merely to be seen in the ravages occasioned by his sword; or, that while he shakes the *natural* world, he cannot affect the *moral*. Let the influence come home to your bosoms. Think what it is to die, and to enter upon an unknown state. Consider, I entreat you, what are the everlasting consequences

quences of such a change; that it will close the day of trial—close every talent and privilege—close the field of exertion and improvement—that it will send the naked spirit to the tribunal of its maker, and usher it into joy or misery unspeakable. “Whatsoever therefore your hand findeth to do, do it with your might, for there is no work nor device, nor knowledge nor wisdom, in the grave whither ye are going.”—It is probable, that some of you have lately buried in this ground a parent, a brother, a sister, or the near companion and partner of your life. You have some, perhaps many, valuable relatives reposed in this sequestered spot; and were you to take up a handful of its dust, ye might say, *this was once my possession*. Surely, of all men, you are most inexcusable, if you can depart from this scene, unaffected in your hearts, or unresolved in your principles. But I hope better things of you—even things which accompany salvation. God grant, that we may all be awakened to a due sense of our mortality; and that having been assembled this day for the purpose of mourning and lamentation, we may all be reunited in that blissful state, where *the spirits of just men are made perfect* in love, goodness and glory!

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